Joining of International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor by India

1721. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether during the recent visit of the British Prime Minister to New Delhi the question of India joining the International Thermounclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project came up for discussion;

(b) if so, the details of the project and the outcome of the discussions;

(c) whether the European Council has already recognised India's proven scientific capabilities in the area of thermonuclear reactors;

(d) whether India had already fulfilled all conditions for joining the project, including support for the Non-proliferation Treaty; and

(e) the decision taken on Governments' application in the US-EU meet on September 13, 2005?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (e) The European Union has supported India's participation in ITER. During the 6th India-EU Summit, the EU led by U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair reiterated support for India's participation in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project. ITER is an international programme that intends to demonstrate the scientific and technological feasibility of fusion energy for peaceful purposes. At present 6 countries i.e. China, EU, Japan, ROK, Russia and the US are partners in the project.

India has expressed its interest in joining the ITER as a full partner on the basis of its advanced scientific and technological base and its established record of R&D in fusion research. India was invited to a meeting of officials on the ITER project at Cadarache in France on September 12, 2005 where it made a presentation. The ITER partners have discussed the possibility of accession by India to ITER. Negotiations on the issue are continuing. Support for Non-proliferation Treaty is not a condition for joining ITER.

Intimidation of Indians in Bangladesh

1722. SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a recent incident, wife of India's Deputy Commissioner to Bangladesh was intimated in Dhaka;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what steps Government are being taking to protect and promote rights of minority communities in SAARC countries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMMED): (a) and (b) On September 15th 2005, a vehicle of the High Commission of India, Dhaka with diplomatic plates, in which spouse of Acting High Commissioner was travelling was blocked and confined by a group of people on a public road in Dhaka. Several persons, including some armed with automatic assault weapons, thereafter assaulted the mission's vehicle, used abusive language against the spouse of the acting High Commissioner and forcibly detained the chauffeur and the vehicle. The High Commissioner filed a complaint against the incident with the police. The issue was also taken up with the acting High Commissioner of Bangladesh in New Delhi and the Government of Bangladesh in Dkaka, where our shock and serious concern at the incident was converyed. The Government of Bangladesh was also urged to take necessary action in the matter.

(c) The primary responsibility for the protection of the life, liberty and property of all citizens, including minorities, rest with the Government concerned. Government of India in its bilateral dialogue with SAARC countries does emphasize the need for a just and humane treatment of minorities and respect for their basic human rights. Government of India has also been participating in developmental and reconstruction projects in some SAARC countries targeted at the welfare of the minority communities.

Pakistani visa to Indian pilgrims

1723. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have impressed upon the Government of Pakistan to grant visas to Indian pilgrims who propose to visit Hindu temples at Katasraj and other places in Pakistan on reciprocal basis as Indian Government issue large number of visas to Pakistanis to visit places of pilgrimage in India;

(b) if so the details in this regard; and

(c) by when the action thereon is likely to be taken?